



Addressing the impacts of COVID-19 on Pacific Island Countries

Rapid Policy Appraisal

UNESCAP Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (PFSD) 2020
14 December Nadi, Fiji

Objectives

To inform the UN's ongoing socio-economic response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across the 10 countries:



To develop a clearer understanding of the nature and extent of (current and future) socio-economic impacts of COVID



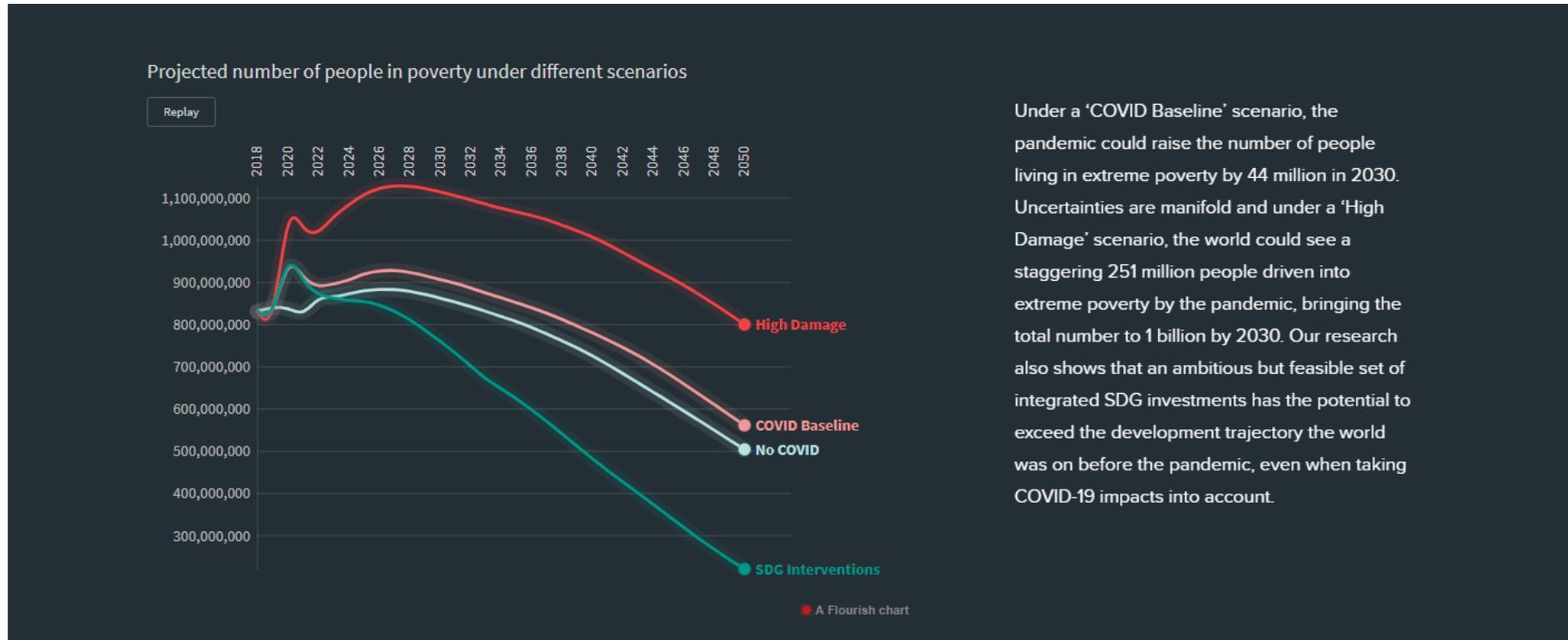
To provide policy direction on where (short, medium and long-term) effort should best be allocated



To determine programming entry points for UN and partners to support countries with ongoing recovery efforts



Impact of Covid-19 on the SDGs



<https://sdgintegration.undp.org/accelerating-development-progressduring-covid-19>

Click [here](#)

Assessing the impacts: lessons learned



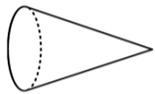
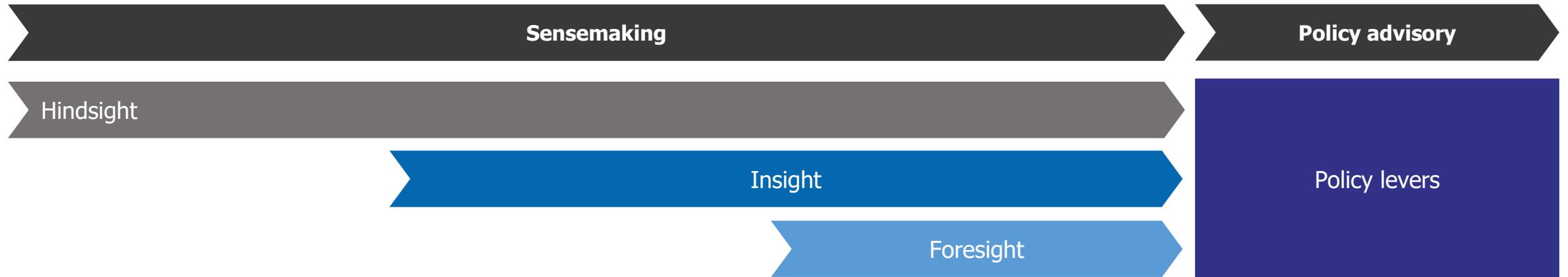
1. **Ongoing** nature of the crisis
2. **Uncertainty** globally and across the region
3. Impacts across sectors is **dynamic**
4. **Quantifying the future impacts** may not be possible
5. **Unprecedented possibilities**



The RPA offers the basis for **policy levers**:

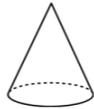
- Current impacts and learning from the past
- Forward looking and probable scenarios
- Integrated across sectors and disciplines
- Disruptive

Method



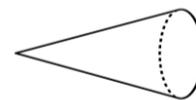
Learning from the past

- Other ongoing assessments
- Econometric data
- Socio-economic reports
- Empirical data



Understanding the true nature of the crisis

- Econometric data
- Socio-economic reports
- Ethnographic data
- Expert opinion



Determining future likely consequences

- Scenario analysis
- Trends analysis
- Expert opinion

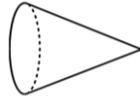


Navigating the evolving future

- Systems analysis



Hindsight



Epidemics shaping
Pacific communities



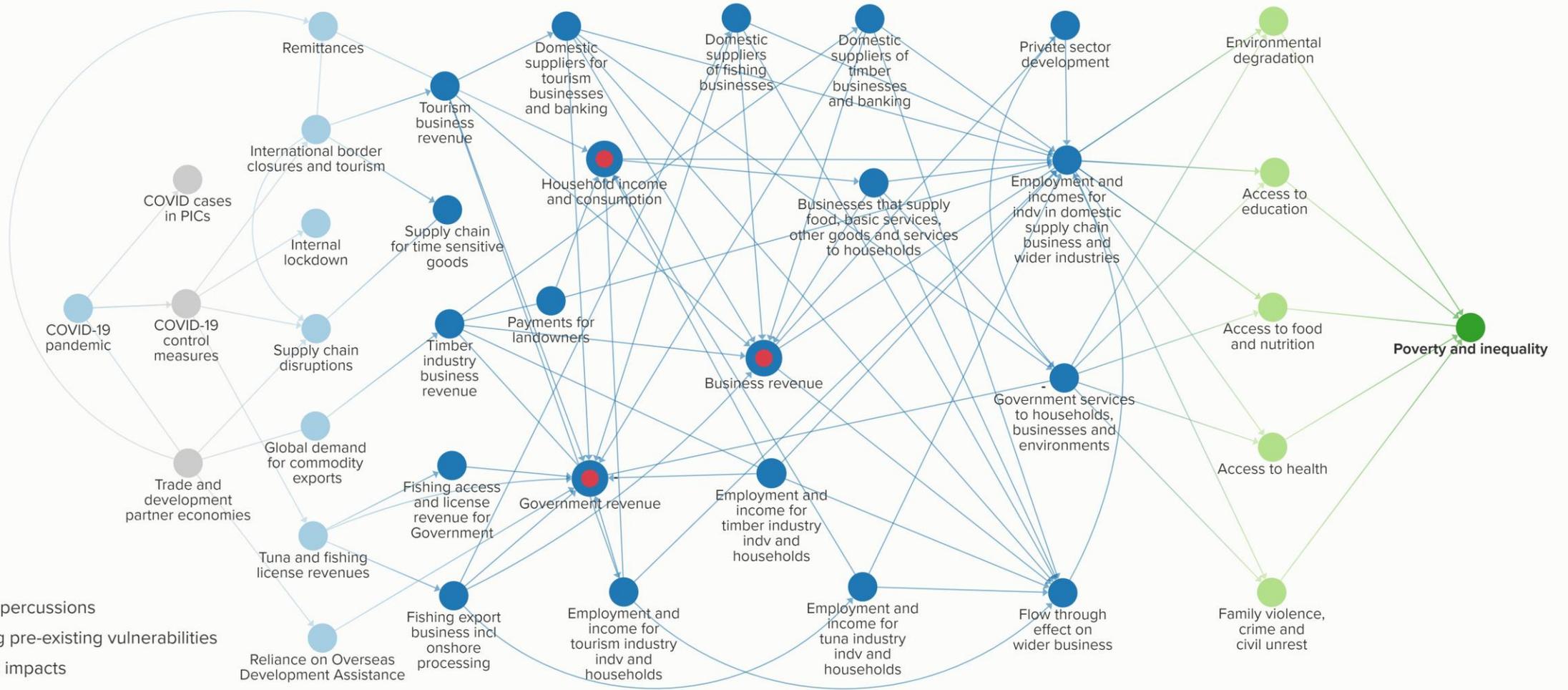
Development progress
and performance



Governance and
social development



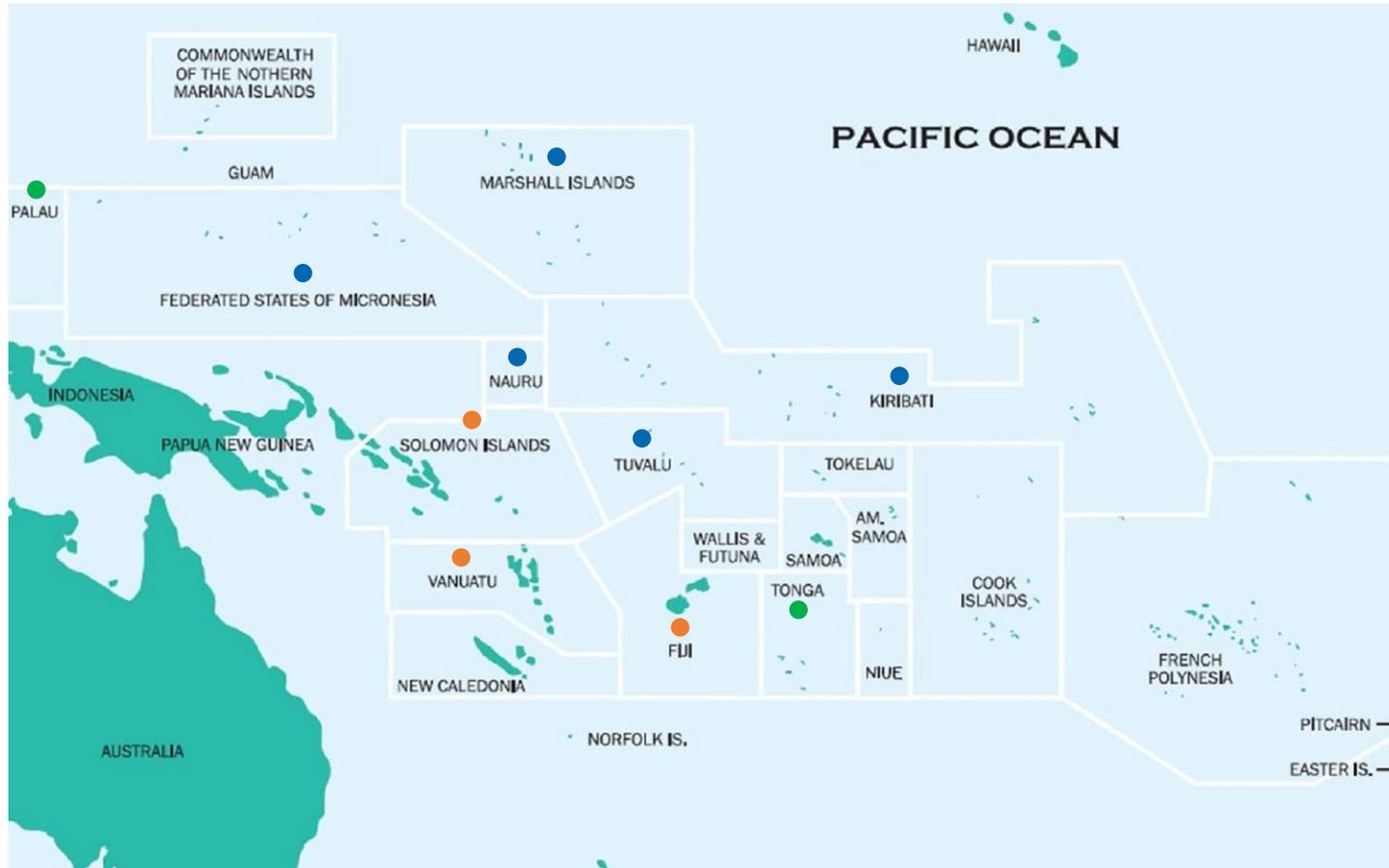
Climate and
disaster risk



Legend

- Disruptors
- Economic repercussions
- Exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities
- Aggregating impacts

Insight: country clusters



Group 1: Disruption and Uncertainty

- The high dependency of **Fiji** and **Vanuatu** on tourism and the **Solomon Islands** on timber exports now equates to greater exposure to global market dynamics and the impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns for these countries. Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands are the least aid dependent of the group of 10 but also have larger populations that are highly vulnerable to increasingly intensified hydrometeorological events. COVID-19 cases have been recorded in both Fiji and Solomon Islands and two people have died of COVID19 in Fiji {at time of writing}. To date, these countries have been at the highest risk of COVID-19 infection due to population size, constrained health care capacity, Fiji's role as a regional travel hub, and Solomon Islands proximity to Papua New Guinea.

Group 2: Deepened Dependencies

- **Tonga's** high indebtedness and dependency on aid and remittances for over 60% of its GDP mean that the loss of national tourism revenue (which usually contributes to around 11% of national GDP) is likely to be translated into further debt causing debt distress or further dependency on external aid. Similarly, in **Palau** the loss of revenue from the tourism sector which accounts for as much as 43% of GDP will create deepened dependency on an expiring US Compact agreement.

Group 3: Dependency on the Deep

- **Kiribati**, the **Marshall Islands**, **FSM**, **Nauru**, and **Tuvalu** are all highly dependent on tuna and fishing license revenue. Aid constitutes a similar percentage of GDP across these countries. While COVID-19 has potential to continue to alter revenue from fisheries the dynamics, challenges, and risks involved with this industry are not far different from the pre-COVID19 situation.



Children



Women



Informal workers
and those
employed in MSMEs



Subsistence fishers
and farmers



Young people



People with
disabilities



Single and women
headed households



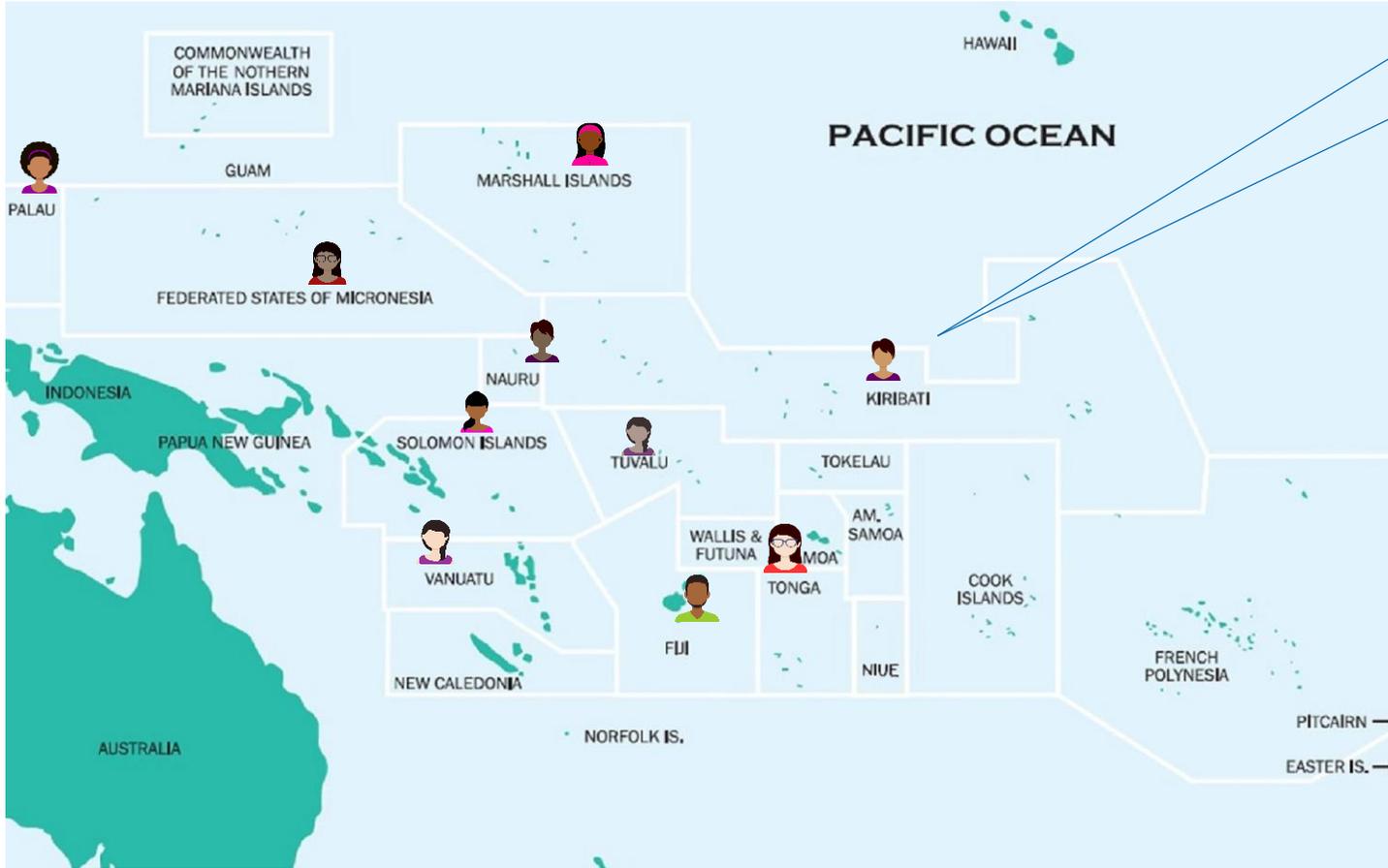
The 'new' poor



LGBTQI+



Older people



Taabeta – Kiribati

Taabeta works as a seafarer on a German-owned purse-seine fishing ship and is usually out at sea for long periods of time – around three to six months. Kiribati is surrounded by a 200 nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone, and Kiribati's economy depends heavily on fishing and fishing licensing revenues. Taabeta trained at the Marine Training Centre in Tarawa and has been working as a seafarer for around eight years. His job is to catch and haul in the skipjack tuna, which is then transported to other countries such as Fiji for onshore processing. Seafaring is considered a lucrative and prestigious job in Kiribati, compared to that of many of his friends and family members. Taabeta normally sends home around half of his salary to support his wife and three children, as well as his siblings and his parents.

Taabeta was out a sea on a contract when the Kiribati government first introduced international travel restrictions and border closures. For the first few weeks of the pandemic, Taabeta and his crew were stranded at sea after the end of his contract and he was unable to reunite with his family. However, after a few weeks Taabeta was able to be repatriated home to Kiribati. Not able to find other work, Taabeta was able to access the Kiribati government's three-month unemployment package. Taabeta and his family are worried about the COVID-19 pandemic and there have been a lot of rumours circulating in the community and social media. Earlier in the year, communities in Tarawa after a Russian fisherman became ill and it was incorrectly assumed that he had the virus. There have also been false articles shared on social media about how coconut (known as *moimoto*) and noni, an indigenous fruit, can be used as a cure for the virus.

Emerging innovations



Strong community
mobilization

- Emergency food packs in Vanuatu
- Home and communal gardening in Fiji
- Villages creating their own blockades during lockdown in Solomon Islands



Accelerated digitalization

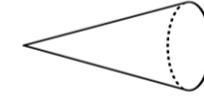
- Barter for Better Fiji
- Remittances through Vodafone and M-paisa
- E-learning



Agile responses by
government and
social institutions

- Price gauging app in Fiji
- Sending learning material to off island communities in Tuvalu
- Helplines for gender violence, mental health, food etc.

Foresight: building likely scenarios



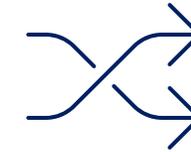
Future settings

- **Border Policy**
- Lockdown
- Outbreak
- Climate change, disasters



Shift principles

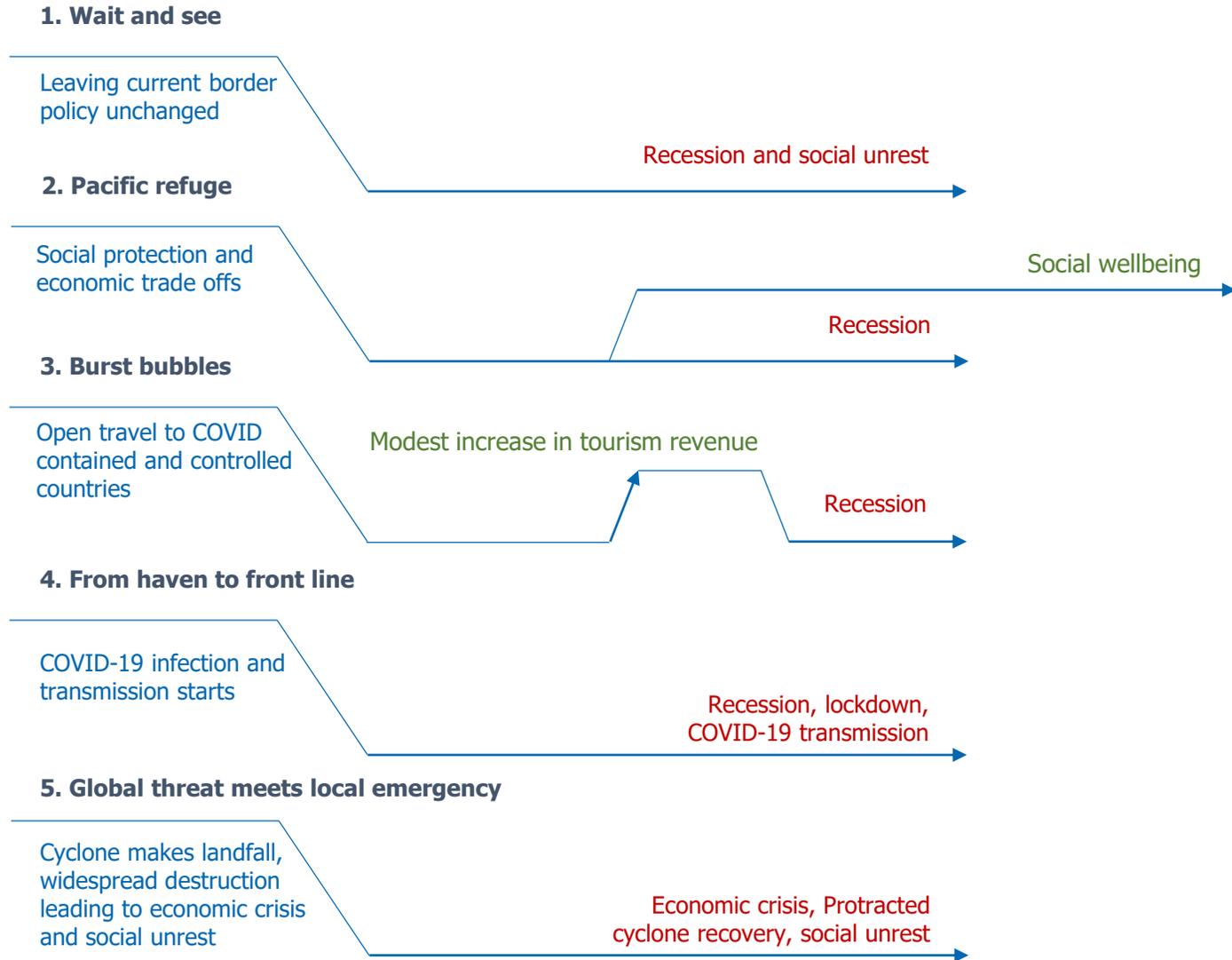
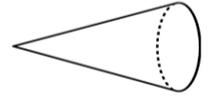
- Reactive to proactive
- Short-to- longer term horizon
- Dependency to self-sufficiency
- Vulnerability to resilience
- Remote to connected
- Incremental to transformative



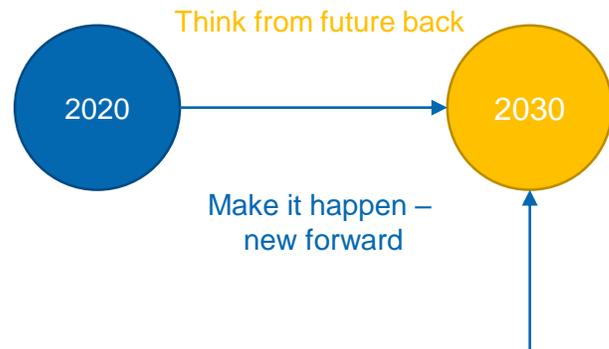
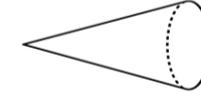
2-speed development

- Balancing
- Short/medium-long term objectives

Foresight: short-term scenarios

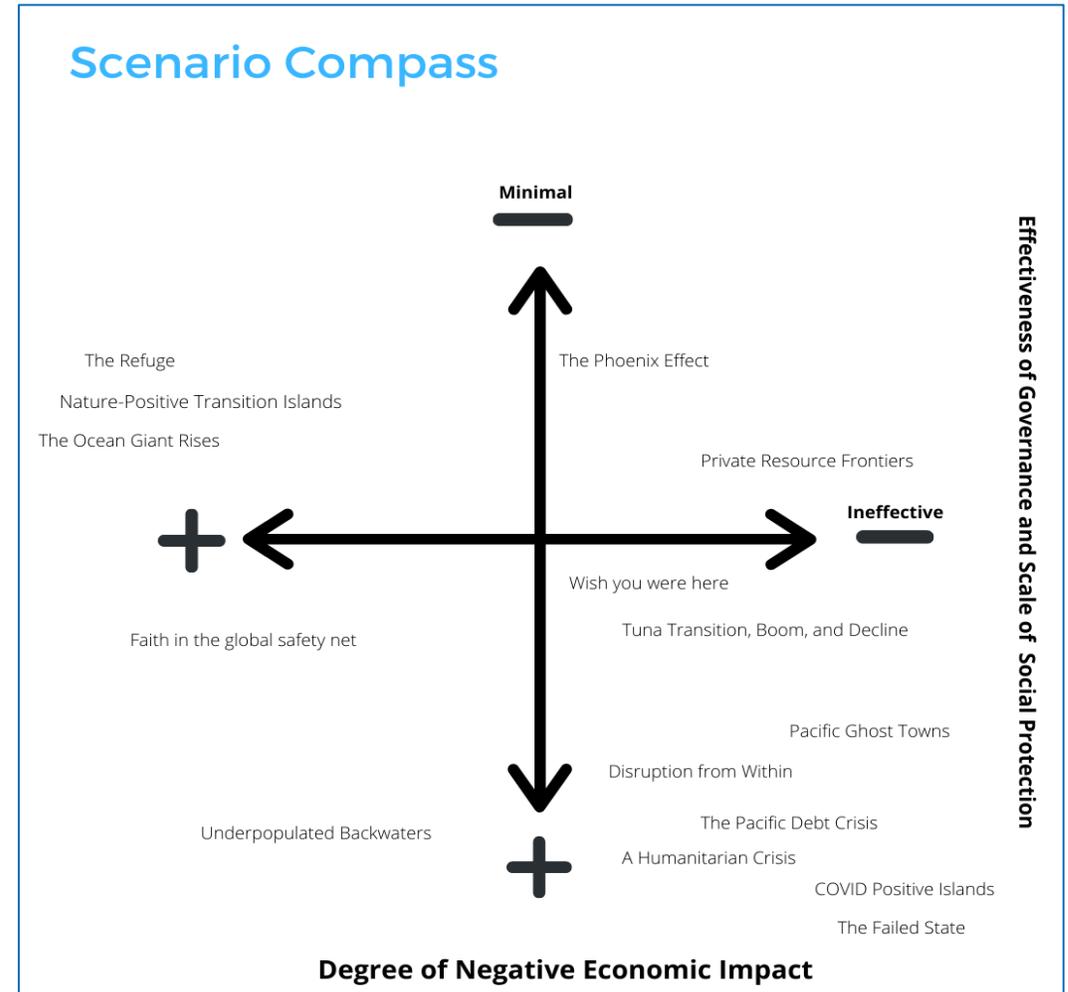


Foresight: longer-term scenarios

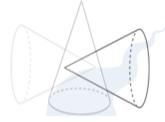


Policy Considerations

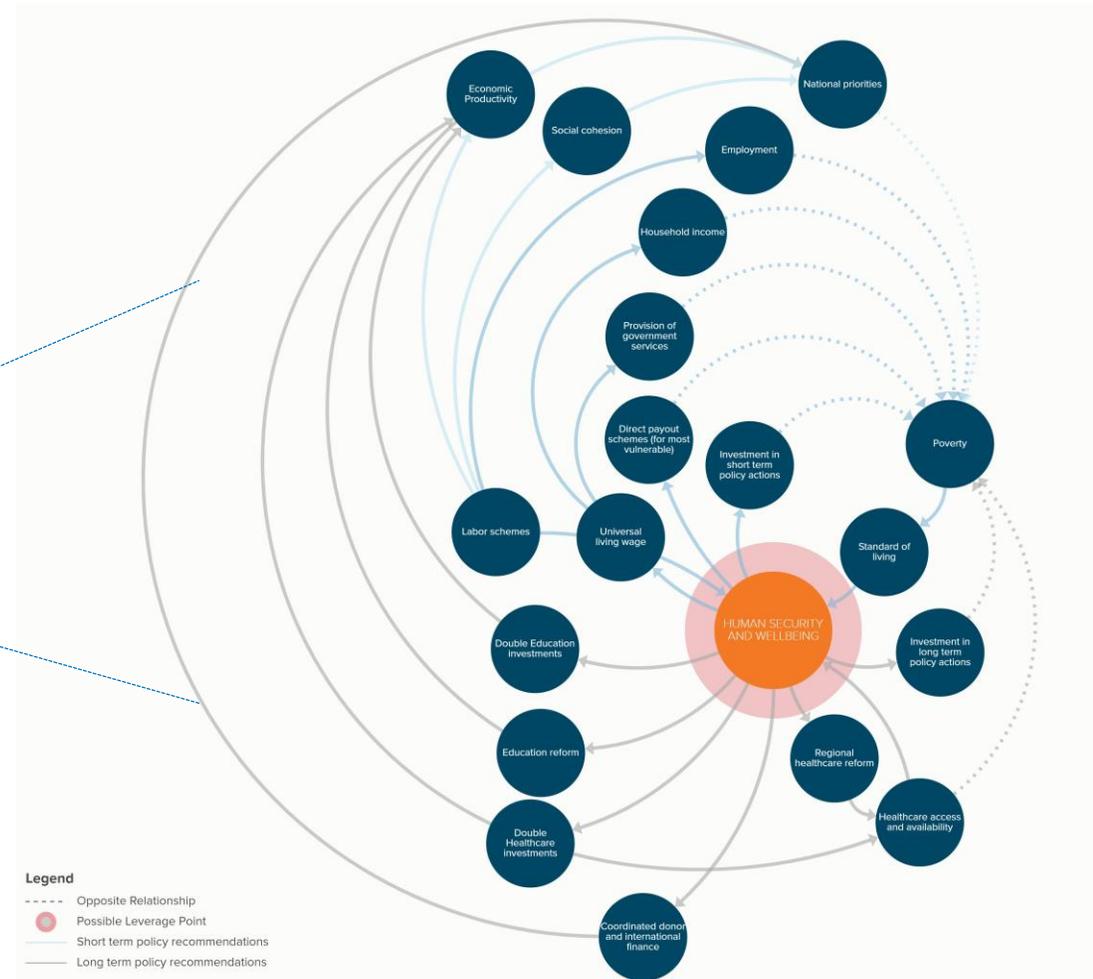
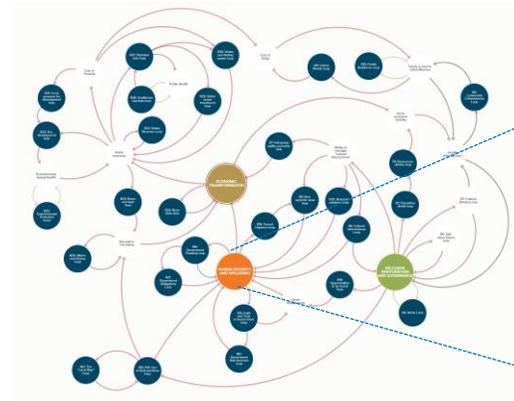
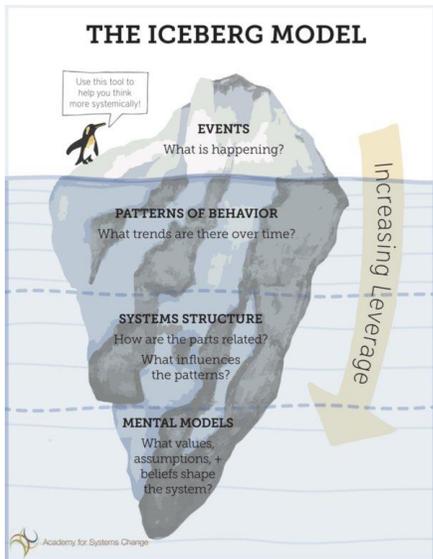
- 2030 Agenda
- 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy



Policy Levers

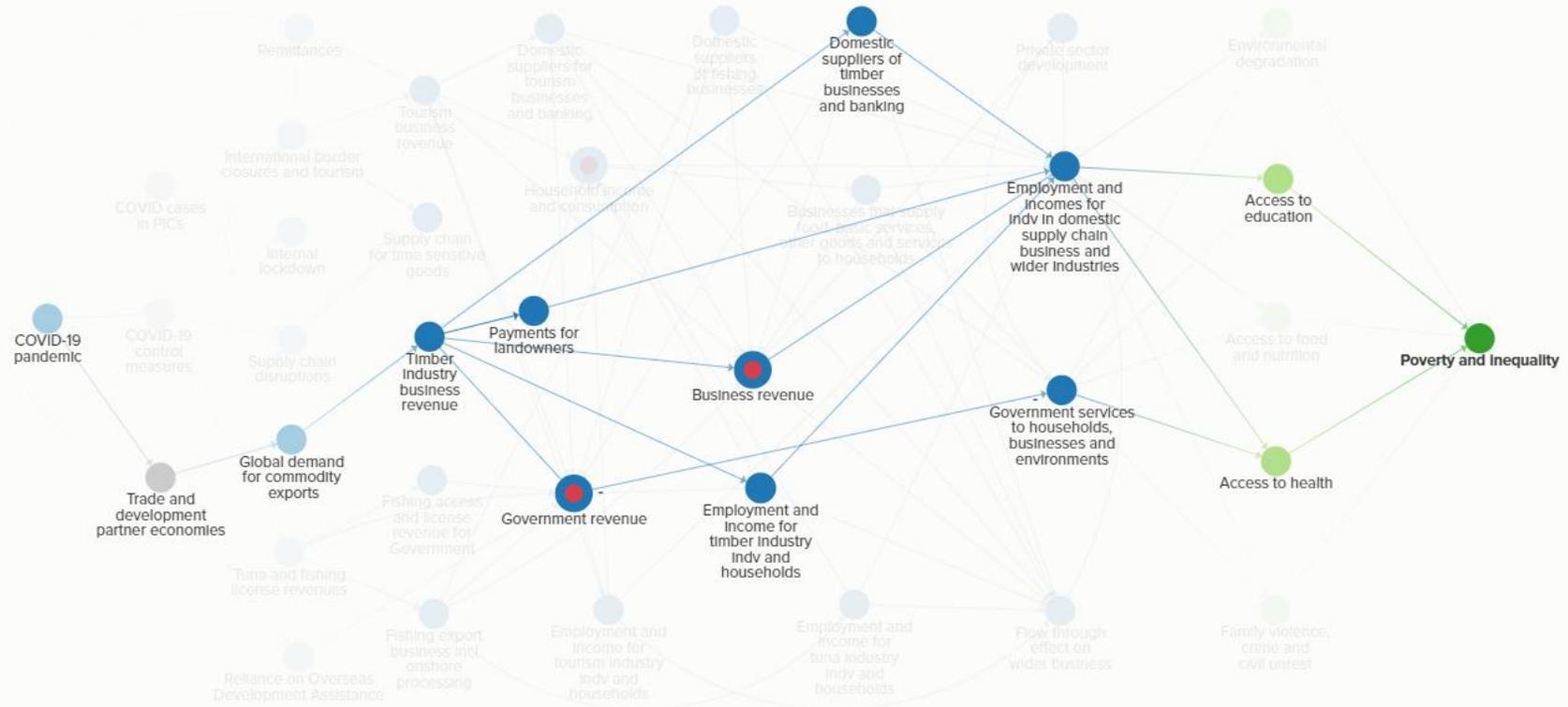


1. SOCIAL: putting human security and wellbeing at the center
2. ECONOMIC: from resets to transformations
3. GOVERNANCE: anticipatory, agile and inclusive



Solomon Islands

DISRUPTORS AND IMPACT PATHWAYS



POLICY ENTRY-POINTS

1. Budget prioritization
2. Mid-Term Development Plan
3. National Financing Framework

NEXT STEPS

- Sols Policy appraisal
- Country specific UN programming



THANK YOU

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